The indignant nation

The Indignant Nation: Australian Responses to the Attempted Assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868[1]

The basic facts surrounding the attempted assassination of Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, are well known. Alfred, Queen Victoria's second son, had embarked on a world cruise in the *Galatea* at the beginning of 1867. It was the first royal tour of Australia, a signal moment in both the crown's repackaging of itself for domestic audiences in Britain and the process whereby monarchy was asserted as the central pillar in Britain's imperial order.[2] This reinvention of the monarchy was bolstered by technological advances in transport – which, as Walter Bagehot wryly observed, 'changed stationary potentates into locomotive observers' – and by developments in mass communication and the circulation of news.[3] Queen Victoria's eldest sons – the prince of Wales and the duke of Edinburgh – were key actors in these attempts to project the image of a monarchy attentive to Britain's settler colonies and solicitous of the needs of its subject peoples. The visit of Alfred's elder brother to North America in 1860 established the script for increasingly frequent royal tours of the British Empire over the coming decades.[4]

Prince Alfred had, in fact, been the first member of the royal family to visit the Cape Colony (albeit in his capacity as a naval officer) in 1860 and fittingly the *Galatea* stopped there

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[2] W.M. Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism: The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914* (Basingstoke, 1996); D. Bell, 'The Idea of a Patriot Queen? The Monarchy, the Constitution, and the Iconographic Order of Greater Britain, 1860-1900', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xxxiv (2006), pp. 3-21.

[3] Cited in A. Atkinson, *The Muddle-headed Republic* (Oxford, 1993), p. 5.

[4] I.W. Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto, 2004).

in 1867 having visited the Mediterranean and the emperor of Brazil.[5] From the Cape, Alfred proceeded to Adelaide and arrived in October 1867. His tour (which took in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland) was comprehensively recorded in the press, which reported an endless round of official engagements, loyal addresses, triumphal arches, civic receptions, dances, fêtes and picnics. These standard features of royal tours mixed with more distinctively Australian activities, such as kangaroo shooting and bush camping in South Australia and a popular encounter between Charles Lawrence's aboriginal cricket team and a team of army and navy officers in Sydney. The recorded public responses of the colonists were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Even so they were not completely untroubled by the perpetual challenge of striking a proper balance between authentic loyalty and respectable restraint and were marked by a familiar mix of genuine affection, civic one-upmanship, intercolonial rivalry and commercial opportunism.[6] Such relatively minor tensions during the visit were, however, soon to be completely overshadowed. On 12 March 1868 Prince Alfred was in New South Wales and attended a charity picnic at Clontarf, a park on the north shore of Sydney's middle harbour. As he crossed the park he was shot point-blank in the back by a would-be assassin, who managed to get off another two shots from his revolver before being wrestled to the ground. With some difficulty the police, assisted by the Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, prevented the crowd from lynching Henry O'Farrell and he was spirited away on a steamer.

[5] C. McCreery, 'Telling the Story: HMS Galatea's Voyage to South Africa, 1867', *South African Historical Journal*, lxi (2009), pp. 817-37. Alfred's first visit in 1860 is re-imagined in R.S. Levine, 'Prince Alfred in King William's Town, South Africa: 13 Auguest 1860', *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, xiv (2010), pp. 137-44.

[6] P. Cowburn, 'The Attempted Assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh, 1868', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, lv (1969), pp. 19-42. The itinerary and activities were dutifully recorded in the commercially successful 'official' account of the tour, Rev. J. Milner and O.W. Brierly, *The Cruise of H.M.S. Galatea* (London, 1869).

Historians might easily fall back on a familiar lexicon to describe what followed in the hours, days and weeks after the attempt: an episode of 'hysteria', an 'orgy of loyalty'. There were two notable aspects to the public response. First, the hundreds of 'indignation meetings' that were held across the colonies in the coming weeks. Secondly, some of the hallmarks of a 'Fenian panic' and the ramping up of sectarian tensions, all-too-familiar occurrences in other parts of the British world across 1867 and 1868.[7] The attempted assassination has, of course, featured in Australian historiography, though the latter aspect of the response has received the far greater share of attention. It has been used principally as a lens through which to examine sectarian and ethnic tensions and the position of the Irish in Australia in the nineteenth century.[8] The argument developed in this article, through an examination of the response in general and the form and content of the indignation meetings in particular, is two-fold.

First, it argues that the attempted assassination was a moment whose significance is greater than much of the existing historiography would suggest. As a crisis which interacted with politics in the different Australian colonies and also had significant transnational dimensions it illuminates far more than accelerating sectarian unease. Indeed, the scale of the response, which was prolonged and above all *emotional*, provides important insights into the political culture of late-nineteenth-century Australia at a moment between those constitutional milestones of responsible government in the 1850s and Federation in 1901. It

[7] The recent historiography of Feniansim is large and growing, but for two treatments which take its transnational dimensions seriously see B. Jenkins, *The Fenian Problem: Insurgency and Terrorism in a Liberal State 1858-1874* (Liverpool, 2009); N. Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge, 2012).

[8] P. O'Farrell, *The Irish In Australia* (Kensington, 1986), pp. 208-15; R. Travers, *The Phantom Fenians of New South Wales* (Kenthurst, 1986); K. Amos, *The Fenians in Australia 1865-1880* (Kensington, 1988); R. Davis, 'The Prince and the Fenians, Australasia 1868-9: Republican Conspiracy or Orange Opportunity?', in F. McGarry and J. McConnel, eds., *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 121-34. A partial exception, which makes a distinction between the indignation meetings and the wider response, is the account in J.B. Hirst, *The Strange Birth of Colonial Democracy: New South Wales, 1848-1884* (Sydney, 1988), pp. 74-9.

fulfils some of the criteria sociologists have identified as the hallmarks of 'cultural trauma', an approach that has fruitfully been developed through examination of successful assassinations in the twentieth century. The argument pursued here owes much to the methodology and definitions adopted by Ron Eyerman, whose narrations of the aftermath of twentieth-century assassinations pay careful attention to the 'meaning struggle' that follows such shocking occurrences and to the way in which they initiate and sustain 'a deep-going public discourse on the foundations of collective identity'.[9]

The second principal argument relates to the content and outcome of this public discourse. Close examination of responses to the assassination of course reveals anti-Irish animus and sectarian fissures. These will be dealt with only briefly here in favour of analysis of those other areas of division and tension revealed by the response. Arguably, however, examining the event as one which uncovered latent divisions within the Australian body politic fundamentally misrepresents an event which also acted as a powerful stimulus to the articulation of commonalities. Indeed, such a perspective has been hinted at in the Canadian context, where the near contemporaneous and all-too-successful assassination of the politician Thomas D'Arcy McGee in April 1868, apparently by a Fenian, has been presented by some historians as a foundational moment of modern Canadian nationalism.[10] Mark McKenna has highlighted the possibilities of this perspective by describing the monarchy's 'pivotal role in the formation of Australian identities', while lamenting that this role has been all-but ignored by a combination of left-wing condescension and right-wing complacency.[11] In short,

[9] R. Eyerman, *The Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination: From MLK and RFK to Fortuyn and van Gogh* (New York, 2011), pp. xv, 18.

[10] McGee became the 'patron martyr' of the Canada First movement, which met shortly after his death, see C. Berger, *Sense of Power: Studies in the Idea of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto, 1970), ch. 2; David A. Wilson, *Thomas D'Arcy McGee: Volume II. The Extreme Moderate, 1857-1868* (Montreal & Kingston, 2011), ch. 17.

[11] M. McKenna, 'Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference', in D.M. Schreuder and S. Ward, eds., *Australia's Empire* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 261-87. See also Atkinson, *Muddle-headed Republic*, ch. 1.

the scale and depth of the response suggests that monarchy mattered and the content of numerous speeches sought to combine this with a self-consciously national vision. While the anti-transportation movement has featured as a powerful 'national movement' (even as a precursor of 'nationalism') within colonial Australia, more recently the very Britishness of the language underpinning this movement in opposition to official British policy has been remarked upon.[12] Something similar was apparent in 1868, as colonists deployed an emotional language of loyalty, but redefined it carefully in the colonial context of responsible government. The attempted assassination renders peculiarly visible colonial elites struggling to work through what it meant to be, in the justly influential phrase of Keith Hancock, 'independent Australian Britons'.[13] As such this article both implicitly challenges a standard chronology, which places the first significant 'nationalist' movements in the 1880s (while sometimes acknowledging an important precursor in the anti-transportation movement) and aligns with the content of some recent approaches to the question of Australian Federation, which seek to move away from materialist and utilitarian explanations for political actions.[14]

I

The scale of the public response to the attempted assassination was quite remarkable and, crucially, it was national in scope. The sense of shock and disorientation was all the more keenly felt and all the more fervently expressed because of the widespread enthusiasm for

[12] For its description as a 'national movement' see K. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists: An Exploration of Social History, 1788-1870* (Melbourne, 1974), p. 46. P.A. Pickering, 'Loyalty and Rebellion in Colonial Politics: The Campaign against Convict Transportation in Australia', in P. Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005), pp. 97-107; B.T. Jones, *Republicanism and Responsible Government: The Shaping of Democracy in Australia and Canada* (Montreal & Kingston, 2014), ch. 7.

[13] This formed a title of one of the chapters in W.K. Hancock, *Australia* (London, 1930). The phrase had previously been used by Alfred Deakin in 1900.

[14] H. Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution* (Cambridge, 1997); J.B. Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2000).

the royal visit which had preceded O'Farrell's efforts. It was also 'spontaneous' in the sense that it did not rely on explicit direction from the colonies' political institutions. Indeed, it could hardly receive much support from the colonial parliaments. New South Wales' was the only legislature sitting at the time of the assassination. The others were either between sessions (Tasmania and Queensland), engaged in an election (South Australia) or, in the case of Victoria, in session but engaged in a long-running constitutional crisis over the relative powers of the Colonial Office in London, the Governor and the two houses in the colony.[15] The first indignation meetings took place on the day following the assassination and in framing the response of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly a shaken James Martin, while maintaining that the chamber should 'speak authoritatively for the whole colony', must have been aware that simply being 'representative' of public opinion was no longer sufficient under the circumstances: 'Even while I am now speaking a large meeting (the largest I believe ever held in Sydney) is taking place in Hyde Park.'[16]

This sense of indignation as a spontaneous and popular response was underlined by the careful actions of representatives of the crown, who made sure not to appear to be involved in the instigation of these meetings. So, for example, in Brisbane the acting Governor, Maurice O'Connell, wrote a letter to provide an explanation as to why he was not taking the chair at the town's indignation meeting: 'it would be better not to leave room for any suspicion that the indignation of the people come from any source but the promptings of their own hearts'.[17] In Perth, where there was less of a regularly constituted local elite to rely on, the Governor consented to take the chair, but made it clear that he did so as a 'private

[15] D.P. Clarke, 'The Colonial Office and the Constitutional Crises in Victoria, 1865-68', *Historical Studies*, v (1952), pp. 160-71.
[16] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 Mar. 1868.
[17] *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.

citizen'.[18] For loyalty to be meaningful it had to come from below, genuine and unsolicited. We should not take these statements at face value, but rather take the claims of spontaneity as part of the process whereby Australian loyalty was proven discursively. The indignation meetings were organised and framed by local political and social elites. Mayors and other civic officials, Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) and Legislative Councils (MLCs), ministers of religion and army officers were among the most frequent speakers. It follows that the content of these events afford us insights primarily into the political sentiments of the political and social elite, though we might conceive of this as a relatively large and widely dispersed group.

Eyerman places a great emphasis on the role of political elites and the media acting as 'carrier groups' in shaping the first response to such potentially traumatic events.[19] In the case of assassination, there is always a considerable space between the event itself and its description. Politicians and editors faced important choices in filling this interpretative gap: was it the act of a madman (or a 'monomaniac' in the language of the time) or should one leap to the immediate conclusion of an organised Fenian conspiracy? The most well-known response is that of the Martin/Parkes government in New South Wales, which rushed a Treason-Felony measure (modelled on a British measure in response to Chartist insurgence in 1848) through both houses on 18 March. The motion met little opposition, though the independent William Forster made some powerful speeches about this interference with 'liberty of speech and the liberty of the subject'. Another speaker, while approving of the bill, presciently remarked that 'he was quite sure that our posterity would say that the Act had been passed under a panic.'[20] The legislation was premised on the idea that government

[18] *Perth Gazette*, 1 May 1868.
[19] Eyerman, *Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination*, p. 27.
[20] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Mar. 1868.

required the powers thus conferred to act on specific information that was hinted at but not revealed. Along with the sustained and controversial actions of Henry Parkes in relentlessly pursuing alleged Fenian conspirators up to and beyond the infamous 'Kiama Ghost' speech, the Treason-Felony Act has been taken to sum up the public temper in the first half of 1868.[21]

There was, nevertheless, considerable scepticism about the Treason-Felony Act, both inside and outside of parliament. Indeed, no less than one week later with the first committal under the provisions of the act politicians were attempting to row back from their earlier acquiescence in its passage.[22] So too the act had been met with a mixed reception in the press. While some commentary endorsed it as sadly necessary, most urged caution in its exercise.[23] Others were extremely sceptical about the 'dangerous experiment' of legislating 'under the influence of national excitement, approaching to a panic'.[24] In the weeks that followed its enactment the press reported gleefully on some of the more farcical uses of the legislation and much commentary came to endorse the *Australasian*'s condemnation of the act:

> the New South Welshmen have out-Heroded HEROD, and placed an act upon their statute book which may easily become the instrument of tyrannical oppression. Freedom of speech has long been considered one of the noblest privileges of a Briton, and we have as yet no proof of any such widespread disaffection existing here as would warrant us in seriously abridging that privilege.[25]

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[21] For Parkes' important role in the O'Farrell case see A.W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: A Biography* (Melbourne, 1980), chs 10-11; *idem*, 'Henry Parkes and the Political Manipulation of Sectarianism', *Journal of Religious History*, ix (1976), pp. 85-92.
[22] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Mar. 1868.
[23] See for example *Mercury*, 28 Mar. 1868; *Queanbeyan Age*, 4 Apr. 1868.
[24] *South Australian Advertiser*, 28 Mar. 1868.
[25] 'Australian Fenianism', *Australasian*, cvi (11 April 1868), p. 464. Arrests under the act were widely reported, for a few examples see *Gundagai Times*, 27 Mar. 1868; *Empire*, 2 Apr. 1868.

Parkes' sustained representation of O'Farrell as the tip of a submerged conspiracy was an outlier in terms the public responses of political elites and editors. Far more common were efforts to stick to the idea that the act was either that of a single deranged individual or was part of a conspiracy, but a numerically and politically insignificant one. In this sense, the initial response of elites bears marked similarities to what Simon Ball has recently identified as the 'liberal script' of the British state in responding to imperial assassinations in the twentieth century.[26]

As part of this collective effort, all newspapers carried adverts for and reports of the indignation meetings. A survey conducted among a wide range of titles within the Australian newspaper press, yields reports of around 250 indignation meetings held in the weeks following the attempt on Prince Alfred's life.[27] This figure almost certainly underestimates the total number of meetings for two reasons. First, of course, not all meetings were necessarily reported. Secondly, this figure only captures meetings whose sole or avowed purpose was the public expression of indignation at the attempted assassination and/or sympathy with the injured prince. In South Australia, for example, where the attempted assassination coincided with an election campaign, election meetings themselves became vehicles for the expression of these sentiments, as did the meeting at Nairne on 16 March.[28]

Even with this minimal figure, the scale and the speed of the response are remarkable. Around sixty per cent of the meetings had taken place within a week of the shooting (which had occurred on a Thursday). The diffusion of the news and the sense in which a 'community

[26] S. Ball, 'The Assassination Culture of Imperial Britain, 1909-1979', *Historical Journal*, lvi (2013), pp. 231-56. For a wider account of the challenges the 'liberal state' faced in confronting Fenianism see, Jenkins, *Fenian Problem*.
[27] This figure is based on an examination of the following newspapers for the dates 13 March to 7 April 1868: *Argus*, *Ballarat Star*, *Brisbane Courier*, *Empire*, *Mercury*, *South Australian Advertiser*, *South Australian Register*, *Sydney Morning Herald*. Two Western Australian newspapers (the *Herald* and the *Perth Gazette*) were consulted for dates between 24 April and 5 May 1868.
[28] *South Australian Advertiser*, 17 Mar. 1868.

of feeling' was being actively brought into being by the event was aided by recent technological developments. From the late 1850s overland telegraph technology had progressively linked colonial capitals with one another and with their hinterlands. It would take until 1869 for an undersea cable to link Tasmania to the mainland and until 1877 for Perth to be connected, but the technology played a key role in linking up different parts of the Australian colonies.[29] Newspapers had been among the key beneficiaries of this technology and increasing space was given over to 'Telegraphic Dispatches' sections providing bulletins from other towns and other colonies. The royal visit itself, but the assassination attempt in particular, was among the first genuinely 'national' news events transmitted via the cables. At many of the meetings in the first week, local mayors triumphantly read the latest telegram on the prince's state of health. Newspaper accounts commented on crowds besieging the telegraph offices to be in receipt of the latest news, while special columns under the heading 'Indignation Meetings' communicated reports of geographically dispersed meetings and helped to substantiate the idea of a national movement.[30] Speakers referred to the role of the technology in creating this national community of feeling, as did the Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales, Geoffrey Eagar:

> When this foul deed was committed the telegraphy wire sent the news with lightning speed through the length and breadth of the land; every village, hamlet, and town

[29] D.R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in an Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 97-110. For stimulating treatments of changing media technologies in Australia and the British world more generally see P. Putnis, 'News, Time and Imagined Community in Colonial Australia', *Media History*, xvi (2010), pp. 153-70; P. Putnis, 'The British Transoceanic Steamship Press in Nineteenth-century India and Australia: An Oveview', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 31 (2007), pp. 69-79; P. Putnis, 'Reuters in Australia: The Supply and Exchange of News, 1859-1877', *Media History*, x (2004), pp. 67-88.

[30] The *Sydney Morning Herald*, for example, had a dedicated column from 18 March onwards.

> arose as one man; the country awoke at once to life and loyalty; and the expression of execration at this unexampled deed was universal and unanimous.[31]

Newspapers and the telegraphic technology they utilised came very close to realising the 'simultaneity' inherent in Benedict Anderson's now famous image of the newspaper reader taking his place within an imagined national community. Indeed, this has been recognised in work on the Australian press, which points to the complex and interlocking set of identities – local, colonial-national, continental-national and imperial-national – that could be articulated.[32]

Arguably, this response was rendered even more obviously national by the fact that, while overland telegraph technology had successfully linked the populations of southern and eastern Australia, direct telegraph communication with Great Britain would not be achieved until the laying of submarine cables from the 1870s. One of the enduring themes of the response to the attempted assassination was a concern as to how it would be perceived in Britain. The day following the attempt the *Argus* reported 'What will they say of us in England when they hear the news? – is the question every one asks' and it was a question that was repeated at many of the meetings.[33] McKenna's description of the response as a 'loyalty play' aptly captures the tension that ran throughout the indignation meetings, which were to be both a notionally spontaneous outpouring of natural loyalty, but also a carefully staged performance for European audiences.[34] This encouraged a kind of national news management

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[31] *Empire*, 25 Mar. 1868.
[32] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. edn, London, 1991), pp. 22-36; A. Coote, 'Imagining a Colonial Nation: The Development of Popular Concepts of Sovereignty and Nation in New South Wales between 1856 and 1860', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, i (1999), pp. 1-37.
[33] *Argus*, 13 Mar. 1868.
[34] M. McKenna, *The Captive Republic: A History of Republicanism in Australia 1788-1996* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 115.

on the part of both editors and politicians. The *Argus* could report on 20 March that the Victoria government along with other colonial administrations was to despatch a special steamer. Whereas the dribble of reports would create consternation in the mother country where 'the shooting of Prince ALFRED will be regarded as in some sort the act of the whole body of Australian colonists, and some will trace the commission of the outrage to that criminal tendency which all the colonies are ignorantly supposed to derive from a common convict origin' this act by the colonial governments allowed for a different strategy. News of the attempted assassination would arrive alongside the news of the prince's recovery and the intelligence that the Australian response had been unanimously loyal.[35]

Eyerman has suggested how important television was in framing the response to President Kennedy's assassination: 'the nation was made witness not to the actual murder, but to the sorrow and grief of thousands of fellow citizens. In this visualised collective reaction, the American nation was constituted as it never had been before.'[36] The newspaper press played this crucial role in 1868, taking on the stage management of the Australian response and reinforcing a sense of national community throughout the crisis. This was perhaps nowhere more clear in the rapid and widespread adoption of the term 'indignation meeting' to describe these gatherings. The term itself is of explicitly North American provenance, a marker of a rich and participatory civic culture, where the misdemeanours of political actors or unpopular policies could evoke an immediate response from an active citizenry. The model was doubtless that provided by antebellum political culture and abolitionist indignation meetings over, for example, the caning of Charles Sumner had been widely reported in the Australian press. They had appeared intermittently in the Australian context before the 1860s. So, for example, in Victoria in 1858, the Legislative Council's

[35] *Argus*, 20 Mar. 1868.
[36] Eyerman, *Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination*, p. 2.

rejection of the Electoral District Alteration Bill had provoked self-styled 'indignation meetings' in parts of Victoria.[37] It took the events of 1868 for indignation meetings to be adopted on a national scale with the rapid communication of the initial meetings by the newspaper press providing models and scripts for future meetings.

The use of this American model is itself revealing. An intriguing article by Michael E. Woods has interpreted similar meetings in antebellum America as a lens onto the emotional content of politics. They were utilised as a means of dealing with and avoiding the potentially dangerous emotion of anger, channelling it into the more morally balanced, socially respectable and beneficial language of just and righteous indignation.[38] This sense of an 'emotional community' being created is clear from the speeches of participants. A constantly repeated trope was that of the inability of language to do justice to the feelings of an outraged and loyal population. John Wall's speech at the Sebastopol meeting is quite typical of the emotional register in which responses were couched: 'the countenances of everyone he met expressed the sorrow and sympathy they felt at so foul a transaction … Language could not express his horror and indignation at it, and he would express it so far as lay in his power.'[39] The nature of the event, which had seen O'Farrell nearly lynched, lent itself to this kind of careful negotiation between frenzied and unreasoning despair and anger and calm, reasoned, just indignation. Editorials and speakers dwelt on the moral superiority of having sublimated these initially furious responses into an indignation, which yet respected the legal process. Samuel Cozens, for example, could congratulate his fellow Australians on not having

[37] See, for example, the report on the 'Monster Indignation Meeting' at Smythe's Creek in *The Star*, 29 May 1858.
[38] M.E. Woods, '"The Indignation of Freedom-Loving People": The Caning of Charles Sumner and Emotion in Antebellum Politics', *Journal of Social History*, xliv (2011), pp. 689-705. For important arguments about 'reincorporating emotions such as anger and indignation, fear and disgust, joy and love into research on politics and protest' see J. Goodwin, J.M. Jasper, F. Polletta, 'Introduction: Why Emotions Matter', in J. Goodwin, J.M. Jasper, F. Polletta, eds., *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago, 2001), pp. 1-24.
[39] *Ballarat Star*, 19 Mar. 1868.

adopted the kind of rough justice which had seen Londoners pelting all 'blacks' on receipt of the news of the Indian Mutiny; they had, instead, discovered 'the right kind of anger' and he reminded his readers: 'Anger without reason is madness.'[40]

In the Australian context the indignation meeting thus fulfilled the same function of mediating between private emotions and their public expression, but it also became a kind of hybrid. Within North America indignation meetings principally functioned as a vehicle of opposition to constituted authority. In Australia in 1868 they fused with existing aspects of political culture to become loyal indignation meetings. More than the repetitious statements of love for the crown that had met the Prince's arrival, the indignation meetings put flesh on the idea of an emotional public relationship between the Australian people and the monarchy.

II

When it comes to discussing the content of these meetings in more detail we should heed McKenna's warnings in his perceptive essay on monarchy. In it he signals the importance of the assassination attempt as furnishing Australia 'with the first in a long line of "un-Australian" acts'. He also suggests caution in treating press reports of a uniformly loyal Australia, not only for our own health (they would 'deaden the sensitivities of the most unforgiving historian'), but also because 'the language is so repetitious and superficial' that it can offer little insight to the range of reasons, besides a genuinely felt loyalism, for

[40] S. Cozens, *The Attempted Assassination of His Royal Highness, Prince Alfred: A Tribute of Affectionate Loyalty to England's Matchless Queen – the Loved and Loving Mother of Many Nations and Peoples and Kindreds of the Earth* (Tasmania, 1868), pp. 10-11.

participating in pro-monarchical activities.[41] In applying these cautions to the responses to the attempted assassination, three points are worth underlining. First, while the language in the press and at the meetings is repetitious, in itself this is important in revealing the means whereby a sense of a unified emotional community was created. As argued above, it was a process in which both the press and national and local elites were complicit. Secondly, while it might be repetitious, there is less cause to label it as 'superficial'. While meetings parroted resolutions speakers very frequently nuanced their individual contributions, bringing in aspects of their own experiences and identities. Certainly these speeches were no more superficial than any similar act of public speaking and, arguably, the reliance on a language of emotion rendered them more 'authentic'. As has been rightly asserted for a different historical context 'an instrumental use of language does not necessarily signify absence of belief: manipulation and principle are not exclusive'.[42] Thirdly, a careful reading of the press does allow us access beyond the idea of a carefully created uniformity to at least speculate on some of the differences in motivation and some of the divisions within the vision of the national community that was projected.

While the focus of this article is on the mediated public responses to the attempted assassination, this is not to foreclose on what might be a very different history of private emotional responses to the event. Such personal responses may be recoverable using different source material such as diaries and personal correspondence, an approach which has been adopted in part by Cindy McCreery in her recent article on Prince Alfred's reception in the Cape Colony.[43] Such sources might also yield a more complex picture of why so many Australians participated in the response to the attack on the prince. Certainly the arranging of

[41] McKenna, 'Monarchy', pp. 265-75.
[42] P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 165.
[43] McCreery, 'Telling the Story'.

or attendance at indignation meetings might be explained by a range of factors that had little to do with serious horror at the event or the deliberative contemplation of Australian nationality. In a gently mocking piece on 'Loyalty at Melbourne', satirising the initial reception of Prince Alfred, the London weekly *Saturday Review* had speculated on the nature of crowds: 'A great crowd is collected for nearly as many reasons as there are persons in the crowd. One section generally comes to pick pockets; another to drink; an a very large section indeed collects in order to see the crowd.'[44] We could similarly assign numerous non-political reasons for attendance. A sense of the importance of conformity within the heightened emotional context must have operated powerfully. In one of the most eloquent contributions to the Treason Felony debate, Forster identified this dynamic among those who 'did not wish to appear in the minority'.[45] There was also a sense of civic and community competition in the speed and fullness with which loyal sentiments were stated. Speakers at the Brisbane meeting, for example, expressed annoyance that the slowness of the official response 'had allowed Rockhampton and Ipswich to give them the go-bye'.[46] Those who met late felt obliged to explain themselves.[47]

Such apparently 'self-interested' motives were not limited to this hazy idea of not wishing to appear outside of or behind a loyal majority. Indignation meetings could be turned towards the promotion of particular causes as was the large Temperance Sympathetic Meeting, which argued:

> The best way to prevent assassination was to promote teetotalism; for the assassin was invariably such a coward that he was compelled to fortify himself with a false and

[44] 'Loyalty at Melbourne', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art,* xxv (18 Jan. 1868), p. 78.
[45] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Mar. 1868.
[46] *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.
[47] See, for example, report of the meeting at Orange in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Mar. 1868.

> bastard courage, born of intoxicating drink. And the best way to put down Feniansism was to spread teetotalism, for he never heard of a teetotaler who was a Fenian.[48]

Economic self-interest must also have played a role, as is clear from adverts placed by hotel owners in Sydney to affirm that O'Farrell had not stayed in their 'loyal' premises, or letters from irate shopkeepers irked that local agreements to close shops during indignation meetings had not been observed by their commercial competitors.[49] Finally, such meetings could also be a means of establishing local pre-eminence, or challenging the pre-eminence of others, as was the case at Raywood, where an ongoing dispute between the mayor and a successful mining speculator reduced the town's loyal response to a 'miserable squabble'.[50]

Nevertheless, the commonalities of the response are revealing of something more than merely instrumental uses of loyalty. First and foremost, speakers delivered a particular conception of Australian society, one that had significant precursors and would long outlast the response to the attempted assassination. Australia was a 'new' nation, something forcefully expressed throughout the crisis by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The newspaper delivered its fullest vision of this in an editorial on 16 March, urging the 'importance of not allowing non-Australian questions to rise to any prominence in Australian affairs'. All were welcome in this free and open society, but only insofar as they left 'the decaying animosities of the old world' behind them.[51] It was a sentiment appealed to time and time again at the

[48] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Mar. 1868.
[49] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Mar. 1868; *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.
[50] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 21 and 24 Mar. 1868.
[51] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Mar. 1868.

indignation meetings. Sometimes it was lifted directly from the press, as when a speaker read out the *Australasian*'s version of this vision at the meeting of Australian natives.[52]

Crucially, there was considerable flexibility within this broadly liberal account. While some speakers articulated an almost republican emphasis on Australia as a nation of free, democratic and open institutions, others placed more freight on the articulation of an emotive loyalty to the person of the monarch and her family, without exploring these wider issues. Anglican churchmen, for example, could concentrate on a more conservative vision, the Bishop of Goulburn dwelling on 'the sacred person of royalty' and the clergy in their collective capacity emphasising the importance of the extension of the Church of England.[53] Nor, indeed, should this ideological diversity be surprising given the emphasis within recent work on the political and intellectual history of colonial Australia, which demonstrates the complexity and variety of political arguments that could be made under an overarching loyalty to the crown and with appeals to Britishness.[54]

Support for the broadly liberal version of Australian nationhood was most powerfully and most frequently expressed by the many Irish speakers at indignation meetings. One steer was given by the Archbishop of Sydney, who took the opportunity to restate a similar conception of the relationship between old world and new from his Lenten pastoral of 1856:

> Before everything else we are Catholics; and next, by a name swallowing up all distinctions of origin, we are Australians; from whatsoever land we or our parents

[52] 'Fenianism in Australia', *Australasian*, ciii (21 March 1868), p. 368; *Empire*, 25 Mar. 1868. 'Natives' in the Australian context and throughout this article refers to the native-born white population, in contrast to both the indigenous population and to colonists who had been born overseas.
[53] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 and 21 Mar. 1868.
[54] See for examples P.A. Pickering, '"The Oak of English Liberty": Popular Constitutionalism in New South Wales, 1848-1856', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, iii (2001), pp. 1-27; P.A. Pickering, '"Ripe for a Republic": British Radical Responses to the Eureka Stockade', *Australian Historical Studies*, xxxiv (2003), pp. 69-90; B.T. Jones, 'Colonial Republicanism: Re-examining the Impact of Civic Republican Ideology in Pre-Constitution New South Wales', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, xi (2009), pp. 129-46.

> have arrived hither, be it from Ireland, from France, from Scotland, from Germany, we are no longer Irishmen, and Frenchmen, and Englishmen, and Scotchmen, but Australians; and the man who seeks, by word or writing, to perpetuate invidious distinctions is an enemy to our peace and prosperity. The generation of to-day is not to answer for the follies and vices of past generations.[55]

Perhaps its most influential formulation was by Charles Gavan Duffy during his widely reported speech at the Melbourne St Patrick's day dinner, which made similar claims and lauded the role of the Prince's visit: 'his task seemed to me to sow the seed of an Australian nationality, restricted neither by race nor religion, but embracing all in a common bond of brotherhood. (Cheers).' Given the complexities of overlapping identities and political appeals, we should not be surprised that Duffy could slip into a more specifically Victorian patriotism: 'The Constitution of Victoria is, I believe, the freest in the world (cheers), and Irishmen have not only the unrestrained enjoyment of it, but have had their share of the honourable responsibility of administering it.'[56] The speech was widely reported and while there was some small controversy over Duffy's suggestion that if Ireland were given the same constitution and resources as Victoria 'there will not be a more loyal or contented people in the world', it was enthusiastically received and mined for quotations by other Irish speakers at indignation meetings.[57] Nor was Duffy the only Irish nationalist seeking, perhaps, to 'forget his dedication to ceaseless rebellion' in the wider project of identifying and articulating 'a

[55] J. Bede Polding, *The Pastoral Letter of John Bede, by the Grace of God and Favor of the Holy Apostolic See, Archbishop of Sydney, and Metropolitan of Australia, to the Faithful, Clergy and Laity, of the Archdiocese* (Sydney, 1868).
[56] 'Mr Duffy on the Assassination of His Royal Highness', *Freeman's Journal*, xix (28 March 1868), p. 9.
[57] See for examples, *Mercury*, 4 Apr. 1868; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Mar. 1868.

national spirit' in his new home.[58] At Brisbane, the former Young Irelander and MLA, Dr Kevin O'Doherty, similarly addressed the theme of Irish grievances, but subsumed these under more inclusive national sentiments: 'It had been the glory of Australia to abolish all those political inequalities which had caused so much trouble in the old country. He earnestly hoped that this unhappy occasion would be availed of throughout the whole length and breadth of Australia for coming to a resolution that they would allow no old world political organisations to be instituted here, whether they were in favour of Fenianism, Orangeism, or any other "ism".'[59]

In most places there was at least some discussion of whether the Irish community ought to assemble *as* the Irish to express their indignation at the attempted assassination and publicly demonstrate their abhorrence of the would-be murderer. Few perhaps publicly expressed it as strongly as B. J. McCarthy, who wrote a letter to urging 'Irishmen of influence' in Adelaide to call their own public meeting. If they did not, he warned, he would, 'and every Irishman who can and will not attend will be equally culpable with the would-be assassin.'[60] At Brisbane a preliminary meeting of the town's Irish community was held at the Royal Hotel, but it was decided that, instead of placing themselves apart and thus implicitly accepting the link made by some between O'Farrell's actions and his Irishness, the best course of action was to attend as numerously as possible the general public meeting.[61] Irish elites in other Australian towns and cities came to more-or-less the same conclusions, eschewing the idea of specifically Irish meetings (though the St Patrick's day dinners on 17 March provided some vehicle for this kind of response) and instead attending and participating vociferously in

[58] O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, p. 212; H. Irving, ed., *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 5; J.M. Ward, 'Charles Gavan Duffy and the Australian Federation Movement, 1856-1870', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, xlvii (1961), pp. 1-33.
[59] *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.
[60] *South Australian Advertiser*, 16 Mar. 1868.
[61] *Brisbane Courier*, 16 Mar. 1868.

general meetings. Indeed, John Bede Polding was especially strong in his criticism of the idea that Irish Catholics might meet separately:

> How else could it be that some men have expected that we Catholics should stand out from the body of Australians here, and denounce separately, a crime which is denounced by the very elements of all natural and revealed religion? … It can only be that because some few ill-instructed, and ill-advised, have kept up those separating, alienating, misplaced recollections and associations, against which I so long ago raised the voice of warning and entreaty – it can only be so that the least colourable grounds could have been imagined for expecting a specially Catholic protest against the crime, which has overwhelmed us with shame and sorrow.[62]

Nevertheless, the number of speakers who came forward to speak 'as an Irishman' was truly staggering. Clearly in this register the appeal to national unity was in part a defensive one (an answer to some of the offensive ethnic and religious slurs mentioned below), but it also shows widespread support among the Irish community (or at least its elite) for an open and inclusive idea of Australian nationality, with the crown providing a crucial integrative symbol.[63]

Nor were the indignation meetings occasions only for the Irish to buy into this idea of an independent and loyal Australian nationality. Other ethnic groups used the occasion to signal ostentatiously their membership of the nation and had less reason to be circumspect about holding their own specifically ethnic meetings. The German populations of Melbourne,

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[62] Polding, *Pastoral Letter*.

[63] See the important article by D. Lowry, 'The Crown, Empire Loyalism and the Assimilation of Non-British White Subjects in the British World: An Argument Against "Ethnic Determinism"', in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), pp. 96-119.

Sydney and Brisbane met separately and were prominent on the platform elsewhere.[64] They had been equally visible throughout the prince's tour, claiming a special relationship based on Alfred's Anglo-German parentage. As McCreery has highlighted, it was a sense of attachment that Alfred was only too happy to reciprocate and encourage: he had responded enthusiastically to male torchbearers, or *liedertafel*, wearing German national dress and had himself sported different German military uniforms on public occasions in Australia.[65] At indignation meetings Germans could use loyalty to the crown as an anchor for an expansive conception of Australian nationality, as expressed by the MLC, entrepreneur, and enthusiastic supporter of German migration to Australia, Johann Christian Heussler at Brisbane: 'He had not as a rule advocated the bringing of nationalities into a new country. He thought they should leave them all behind and become Australians.' Heussler went further to allude to the liberal credentials of Prince Alfred's European relatives (including his uncle, Prince Ernest, who had taken the liberal side during the revolutions of 1848): 'This cowardly assassin had taken the wrong person altogether if he had a right to take anyone.'[66]

The existence of special kindred ties between the prince and different ethnic communities was not, however, a necessary precondition for the mobilisation of the crown as an integrative symbol of Australian identity. The idea of Australia as a land of perfect practical civil and religious liberty, a haven from the revolutions, bigotry and divisions of the old world, was also appealed to by meetings of Sydney's Hungarian and Jewish populations.[67] The meeting of the Chinese community in Sydney, which had only recently celebrated the passage of the Chinese Immigration Repeal Act, lifting the 'national stigma' of an entry tax on arrival

[64] *Argus*, 26 Mar. 1868; *Darling Downs Gazette*, 21 Mar. 1868; *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Mar. 1868; *South Australian Advertiser*, 17 and 21 Mar. 1868.
[65] C. McCreery, 'A British Prince and a Transnational Life: Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh's Visit to Australia, 1867-68', in D. Deacon, P. Russell, A. Woollacott, eds., *Transnational Ties: Australian Lives in the World* (Canberra, 2008), pp. 60-7.
[66] *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.
[67] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 and 23 Mar. 1868.

and restrictions thereafter, produced an especially eloquent version of these sentiments. It was presented by the champion of the Chinese community, John Dunmore Lang:

> Enjoying as we do, equally with native-born subjects of the empire, the ample privileges and protection conferred by the British Crown, and fully appreciating the liberty we possess to observe our own fasts, to celebrate our own festivals, and to worship in our own way, according to the dictates of our consciences and the customs of our ancestors, we cannot but regard that man as a disgrace to humanity, who, viewing youth as no shelter, and virtue as no protection, would plunge the dagger of an assassin into the heart of the nation by wounding and attempting to destroy one of the best-beloved of her children.'[68]

This liberal theme of toleration under the crown was underlined by the attempt to forge a united religious response to the assassination attempt. Newspapers went to great lengths to describe how universally – by Roman Catholic, Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Jewish congregations – the official proclamations for special public prayers and thanksgivings were observed, while a largely non-denominational language of the dispositions of a merciful providence was much in evidence.[69] As Williamson has shown in a recent comprehensive account of the persistence of these occasions within British national life, it was in the 1860s that a steep decline in the incidence of national prayers and fasts began. Where they persisted was surrounding royal events and calamities, and the proclamation of special thanksgivings in the Australian colonies reveals a similar dynamic. There, as in Britain,

[68] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 Mar. 1868; D.W.A. Baker, *Days of Wrath: A Life of John Dunmore Lang* (Melbourne, 1985), pp. 487-8.
[69] See for example the report on the Sunday 22 March thanksgiving in Melbourne in *Argus*, 23 Mar. 1868; *Victoria Government Gazette Extraordinary*, 13 and 20 Mar. 1868.

they were opportunities for all denominations 'to manifest their patriotism and claims to a full part in national life' as well as a means for ministers to bolster support for the increasingly central institution of monarchy.[70]

Naturally, part of these liberal efforts to fill in an image of Australian nationality involved the identification of things that Australia was not and did not wish to be. Another area where the repetition of the indignation meetings is revealing is in the universal condemnation of the crime and its perpetrator as 'foreign'. This was, indeed, part of the argument about the leaving behind of old world animosities, which were 'foreign' to Australia, but it took in other examples as well. As part of the public discourse aimed at not associating the crime with any particular ethnic or religious grouping, Fenianism was dismissed as un-Australian, un-British, and (by Irish and Catholic speakers in particular) as un-Irish.[71] At one of the earliest indignation meetings, that of the Civil Service Club in Sydney, William Duncan, Catholic apologist, constitutional reformer and customs official, set the tone of future responses in rebutting a nasty public attack on the Irish by William Arnold, speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Not only was Fenianism fundamentally irreconcilable with Catholicism, which was doctrinally loyal, it was also product of rootless and uneducated 'hot-headed young men … villains without any religion whatever'.[72]

Part of this critique rested on the identification of Fenianism as an essentially American confection. Duncan had described its originator, James Stephens, as an American and many other speakers made similar points, as did an Irishman at a meeting in Gawler: 'they are not our people, or if they were, they have lost the Irish character in the cities of

[70] P. Williamson, 'State Prayers, Fasts and Thanksgivings: Public Worship in Britain 1830-1897', *Past & Present*, cc (2008), pp. 121-74.
[71] This was, of course, a local variant of a wider phenomenon of anti-Fenianism in the British world, which made similar claims. See, for examples, M. de Nie, '"A Medley Mob of Irish-American Plotters and Irish Dupes": The British Press and Transatlantic Fenianism', *Journal of British Studies*, xl (2001), pp. 213-40; Wilson, *Thomas D'Arcy McGee*, chs 9-14.
[72] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Mar. 1868.

America'.[73] Alongside numerous references comparing the attempted assassination of Alfred with the all-too-successful one of Abraham Lincoln, an interesting sub-theme of the indignation meetings was the beginning of an audit of America as an exemplar for Australian politics and society.[74] The late 1860s and the aftermath of the Civil War provided an opportune moment for this and if much of the lustre of the American 'republican experiment' had worn off by the 1880s, the indignation meetings served to bring two less attractive episodes of recent American history – assassination and the role of Irish immigrants – into sharp relief.

Finally, that the responses to the assassination attempt involved a wide-ranging discussion about the nature and limits of the Australian nation is clear from a vogue for renaming. Even before his arrival, one pamphleteer had mooted that Australia become an independent constitutional monarchy, with Alfred as King.[75] As well as the renaming of numerous organisations and buildings to memorialise the royal visit, more revealing were suggestions for renaming the colonies themselves. The most prominent proposal came from Joseph Docker, who moved the address on the recovery of the prince and raised an idea that he thought ought to be considered in tandem with the address:

> a humble request for permission to change the name of the colony. Hitherto the colony had been known under a name associated with its origin, and there might be those who would look on the crime we now deplored as the culminating result of its origin. There was another name, to which we had a right. We called our children

[73] *Bunyip*, 21 Mar. 1868.
[74] For examples of speakers making comparisons with Lincoln's assassination see reports of meetings Adelaide and Brisbane in *South Australian Register*, 23 Mar. 1868; *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.
[75] Anon., *A Proposal for the Confederation of the Australian Colonies with Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, as King of Australia, by a Colonist* (Sydney, 1867). The idea that sons and brothers of the monarch might act as colonial governors was a minor theme in some federalist thinking at the time, see Bell, 'Idea of a Patriot Queen', pp. 8-10.

> Australians. We talked of Australian institutions. Why not ask to be permitted to take the name to which we were entitled as he oldest colony, and call our country Australia?[76]

In Docker's proposal as in wider public discussions suggesting the alternatives of 'Alfredland' and 'Alfredea' the tension between thinking in terms of individual colonies and a wider conception of the nation is clear.[77] Others were far clearer that their ideas moved beyond the individual colony, as did a letter writer from Ballarat, who suggested:

> a grand league of all Australians be formed to include all creeds, both of religion and politics, all nationalities, all ranks, from the man of money, and houses, and broad acres, to the humblest labourer upon the soil, the object of the league being the annihilation of all attempts to introduce here any of the old world feuds … it would absorb into its wide Australian ranks every man who is resolved upon maintaining here an Australian nationality.[78]

III

While much of the public and elite response to the attempted assassination was framed in terms of a liberal script, which sought to avoid identifying political violence with any particular ethnic or religious grouping and forwarded a relatively inclusive statement of a loyal and independent Australian nationality, it was not, of course, univocal. The political flexibility of

[76] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Mar. 1868
[77] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 and 20 Mar. 1868.
[78] *Ballarat Star*, 17 Mar. 1868.

appeals to Britishness and loyalty to the crown has been noted above. They could also in some senses furnish both exclusive and defensive statements. The vision of the nation being advanced was one pursued by broadly liberal political elites, and the loudness with which it was proclaimed reveals in part their uneasiness with the material from which it was to be constructed. While focusing on the common themes that emerged powerfully from the indignation meetings does reveal a deep-seated discourse about the meaning of the national community, the essentially unifying themes identified above both excluded and constrained certain groups and jostled with an emphasis on divisions.

In terms of exclusions, McCreery has recently demonstrated how the royal visit and the assassination served to highlight and unsettle gendered discourses within colonial society. Through the representations of comic weeklies, Australia was represented in female guise as a suitor and friend of Prince Alfred and, most famously, as an unbridled and aggressive amazon, strangling the would-be assassin in *Australia Vindex*. In both the response of colonial women – most notably in the all-female indignation meetings in Victoria – the personification of Australia as a female, and in the very frequent allusions to Queen Victoria as the mourning wife and now nearly mourning mother, suitable gender roles were identified and contested, partly as an elite corrective to widespread notions of pushy colonial women.[79] Despite the apparent political involvement of women at their own indignation meetings, for example,

[79] C. McCreery, 'Rude Interruption: Colonial Manners, Gender and Prince Alfred's Visit to New South Wales, 1868', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, xlix (2013), pp. 437-56; J. Castle and H. Pringle, 'Sovereignty and Sexual Identity in Political Cartoons', in S. Margery, S. Rowley, S. Sheridan, eds., *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s* (Sydney, 1992), pp. 136-49. For examples see Cozens, *Attempted Assassination*, ch. 5; Rev. Z. Barry, 'The Lady Australia to her Prince on Valentine's Day, 1868', in W.H.H. Yarrington, ed., *Prince Alfred's Wreath: A Collection of Australian Poems, by Various Authors* (Sydney, 1868), pp. 8-12.

they were not permitted to speak at these, with the speeches and resolutions made by clergymen and other males.[80]

The crisis also served to highlight certain conceptions of colonial masculinities. This was perhaps most notable in the public reflections of people who had been present at the event and depicted their own struggle with an innate manly instinct to lynch the culprit. As such, indignation – rational anger – became an important marker of colonial man having overcome his own atavistic instincts to master his passions and the balancing act was made clear at an indignation meeting of freemasons, at which they were exhorted: 'not to be led away through that just indignation by which they must naturally be deeply moved, but to temper their anger as men.'[81] Samuel Cozens, in praising the loyal and liberal sentiments and the 'fistic demonstrations' that accompanied them of one of the speakers at the Launceston indignation meeting saw an exemplar of the colonial gentleman: 'That is the kind of manliness, that every *man* will lift his hat and politely bow respect to.'[82] As a means of underlining the 'unmanly' nature of O'Farrell's attempt to shoot the Prince in the back, a suitable hero was found in William Vial, a freemason and coachbuilder who had pinioned the would-be assassin at Clontarf and was praised for his 'manly English pluck' at meetings. A testimonial was arranged for him (significantly, the advert was taken out in the name of 'Paddy from Cork') though even then the sense in which expectations about social class disrupted any single notion of colonial masculinity was apparent. The officer who had arrested and roughed up Vial instead of O'Farrell offered a public apology: 'He certainly had learnt a lesson – that the best dressed man was not always the gentleman.'[83]

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[80] See reports of Ladies' Indignation Meetings in Melbourne and Sebastopol, *Argus*, 25 Mar. 1868; *Ballarat Star*, 26 Mar. 1868; 'Great Meeting of Ladies', *Australasian*, civ (28 Mar. 1868), pp. 403-4. The meetings received a considerable amount of satirical comment, see *Melbourne Punch*, 26 Mar. 1868.
[81] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 Mar. 1868.
[82] Cozens, *Attempted Assassination*, p. 27.
[83] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21, 25 and 31 Mar. 1868.

The idea of unrestrained and savage human passions was also used to position Australian Aborigines within the discourse about the nation, but thoroughly outside of the national community described therein. Some Aborigines had been present at Clontarf on the day of the assassination and their presence was mobilised in a number of speeches.[84] In Redfern, a speaker who claimed to have been in conversation with them at the time recalled: 'His first impression was that it was one of the blacks who had inflicted the injury. Little did he think at that time that a man who had all the advantages of education could have performed an act of which those poor half-civilised aborigines would feel ashamed.'[85] Aborigines were used in the same way as 'an Indian thug or an African gorilla' to emphasise that assassination was a savage act quite beyond the norms demanded by a civilised society.[86] A similar point was made by Richard Hill in Sydney, though this time the tension between the initial impulse to lynch O'Farrell and the reasoned case for allowing justice to take its course was clearer: 'These poor creatures, on hearing the sad intelligence … were, in common with ourselves, moved to pity and horror (Cheers). Their consternation was great, and they requested that the murderer might be given up to them (Cheers.) When asked what they would do with him they said they would roast him [A Voice: "You ought to have given him up."]'[87] Aborigines remained outside the vision of the national community imagined in 1868. At most they were included, fleetingly, as useful symbols of the unrestrained passions that white Australians congratulated themselves on having kept in check.[88]

As well as these implicit divisions, 'loyalty' was currency within colonial politics and the assassination attempt could not but play, if obliquely, into local political divisions. Indeed,

[84] For an excellent account of the encounters between indigenous Australians and the prince during his tour, see J. Mitchell, '"It Will Enlarge the Ideas of the Natives": Indigenous Australians and the Tour of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh', *Aboriginal History*, xxxiv (2010), pp. 197-216.
[85] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Mar. 1868.
[86] *Portland Guardian*, 16 Mar. 1868.
[87] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Mar. 1868.
[88] Mitchell, '"It Will Enlarge the Ideas"', p. 210.

this further demonstrates how loyalty to the crown was capacious enough to accommodate various political positions. This was, perhaps, especially the case in Victoria, where a three-year-long constitutional crisis, which had revolved around the relative powers and responsibilities of the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council, ministers and the Governor, was approaching its climax. Indeed, the general elections which had taken place between January and February of 1868 had revolved, in part, around the question of whether the actions of James McCulloch's ministry – in attempting to push a grant to the popular ex-governor Darling through the Legislative Council as part of an appropriations bill – was a constitutionally suspect attempt to dictate to the Legislative Council, the Governor and the queen's government. McCulloch's government, which had registered a slight increase in support at the elections, had resigned on 6 March, in full knowledge that the Governor, Manners-Sutton, would struggle to form a workable ministry.[89]

The Attorney-General, George Higinbotham, increasingly asserted the conclusion that the Governor was constitutionally obliged to act upon the advice of responsible ministers and he would eventually have these principles embodied in resolutions in 1869. This popular position taken by him and others necessarily brought accusations of disloyalty to the crown, something rather relished by Higinbotham on being returned for Brighton during the elections: 'I have been told, gentlemen, that I am a disloyal man. Well, gentlemen, I congratulate the electors of Brighton on being also disloyal men.'[90] Despite these efforts, perhaps partly *because* of his ongoing efforts to achieve the 'disguised republic' in an idea of independence under the crown, Highinbotham was especially effusive in his response to the attempted assassination, moving the committee to prepare the loyal address in the

[89] Clarke, 'Colonial Office', 160-71. See also B. Knox, 'Imperial Consequences of Constitutional Problems in New South Wales and Victoria 1865-1870', *Historical Studies*, xxi (1985), 515-33.
[90] E.E. Morris, *A Memoir of George Higinbotham: An Australian Politician and Chief Justice of Victoria* (London, 1895), p. 138.

Legislative Assembly and moving the first resolution (to a riotous reception) at Melbourne's indignation meeting.[91] This did not stop much play being made by the *Argus* with the dubious 'loyalty' of men who were seeking to indict the duke of Buckingham and dictate to the Governor.[92] It was from this fraught and emotive context that McCulloch's supporters took the pointed title of 'Loyal Liberals' and others formed the Loyal Liberal Reform Association. Similarly in New South Wales, it did not take long for political fissures to appear within the initially univocal response. Most celebrated was William Macleay's attack on Parkes' response to the crisis, which he represented as a cynical manipulation of sectarian feeling 'to make political capital for himself'. Again, the criticism also turned on the authenticity of Parkes' loyalty and Macleay reminded the Assembly that Parkes had been a Chartist and 'as disloyal, he believed, as a Fenian, and more disloyal than the Irish Catholics he abused so much.'[93]

Indeed, Parkes' response to the assassination had played a signal role in sustaining the most obvious divisions revealed and created by the crisis: ethno-religious ones. The argument above does not seek to deny or trivialise the existence of the 'public anti-Irish zeal' of 1868, but it does raise questions about how actively the majority of politicians, editors and local elites were publicly 'fanning the flames'.[94] Much of the reporting and editorialising of newspapers and the majority of the speeches at indignation meetings sought to follow the liberal script and exhorted readers to make the distinction between O'Farrell as an individual and the Irish and Roman Catholics as loyal fellow citizens. Nevertheless, throwaway comments and the more specific anti-Catholic and anti-Irish fulminations of individuals did reveal deep-seated hostilities. The initial responses of some newspapers and numerous speakers at indignation meetings, for example, highlighted an instinctive knowledge that the

[91] McKenna, *Captive Republic*, pp. 118-19; *Argus*, 14 Mar. 1868.
[92] See, for example, the editorial in *Argus*, 26 Mar. 1868.
[93] Martin, *Henry Parkes*, chs 10-11; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Mar. 1868.
[94] O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, p. 211.

assassin would turn out to be a Catholic Irishman, before this intelligence had even been communicated.[95]

Such was the accusation at one of the earliest meetings in a widely reported speech by the speaker of the Legislative Assembly, William Arnold. His narrower version of patriotism chided 'John Bull' for having ignored the accelerating disloyalty in the Australian colonies and he instanced the refusal to drink the Queen's health at public festivities as 'an insult to the English nation.' He was one of those who thought it incumbent on the Roman Catholic 'community' to make an especial effort to demonstrate its loyalty.[96] The meeting of the Sydney City Council offered a similar incident, when Alderman Pritchard made an ill-tempered speech suggesting that the continued airing of the 'wrongs of Ireland' might be met with a poll tax on the Irish as there had been on the Chinese.[97] However, more often than not such sentiments were not openly embraced as part of speeches or resolutions, but instead revealed themselves in carefully reported audience interjections. For example, speakers who tried to maintain the idea that a single monomaniac had been responsible were challenged by audiences as was the Mayor in opening Melbourne's indignation meeting.[98] When a speaker in Gawler praised the response of Irishmen to the assassination and 'wished himself an Irishman' so that he might repudiate the deed more forcefully, one intervention was recorded: 'A voice – "Thank God you are not".[99]

As is well known, O'Farrell's attempt came in the wake of accelerating religious tensions and acted as a catalyst for their further development. The backdrop provided by the long-running controversies over national education in Victoria and New South Wales was crucial. The idea that the trenchant sectarian position adopted by Irish elites on this question

[95] *Brisbane Courier*, 13 Mar. 1868.
[96] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Mar. 1868.
[97] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Mar. 1868.
[98] *Argus*, 14 Mar. 1868.
[99] *Bunyip*, 21 Mar. 1868.

was in large part responsible was pushed by some contemporaries and has been supported by some historians.[100] These tensions carried over into the attempts to memorialise the event as the denominational and sectarian bitterness of the education dispute was carried over into plans for hospitals to memorialise Prince Alfred and the introduction of nursing reforms.[101]

The attempted assassination did indeed provide powerful impetus to the crystallisation of more organised sectarianism in many parts of Australia. Orange Lodges found this an ideal opportunity to multiply, especially in Victoria and New South Wales.[102] Sermons such as that of Zachary Barry, a zealous Anglican and supporter of the Orange lodges, offered a sustained assault on political Catholicism. Eschewing as cant the claims of numerous clergymen that Catholicism was doctrinally loyal, he sketched for his audience Catholic theories of resistance from Bellarmine and Pius V onwards. His critique bore the obvious scars of the religious education controversy, pointing to the use of textbooks that valorised 'The State Trials of 1844' and William Cobbett's *History of the Protestant Reformation* as part of the rich tapestry of Catholic disloyalty which had been ignored but now must be addressed.[103] One of the first fruits of this revitalised sectarianism, alongside new Orange lodges, was the establishment of the Protestant Political Association in March of 1868, explicitly framed in a rhetoric of contesting an already organised Catholic vote. The prospectus for the *Australian Protestant Banner: A Journal of Political and Religious Freedom* was launched during the crisis and stated one of its aims as: 'confronting treasonable

[100] For a contemporary example, see David Blair's comments as Secretary of Victoria's Royal Commission on Education, Morris, *Memoir of George Higinbotham*, p. 151. M. Lyons, 'Aspects of Sectarianism in New South Wales *circa* 1865 to 1880 (Australian National Univ., Ph.D. thesis, 1972); M. Campbell, 'A "Successful Experiment" No More: The Intensification of Religious Bigotry in Eastern Australia', *Humanities Research*, xii (2005), pp. 67-78.

[101] See for examples letters on the memorial hospitals projects in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23, 24, and 25 Mar. 1868 and *Argus*, 25 and 26 Mar. 1868; Judith Godden, 'A "Region of Indecency and Pruriency": Religious Conflict, Female Communities and Health Care in Colonial New South Wales', *Humanities Research*, xii (2005), pp. 79-92.

[102] Davis, 'The Prince and the Fenians', pp. 127-31; D. Fitzpatrick, 'Exporting Brotherhood: Orangeism in South Australia', *Immigrants & Minorities*, xxiii (2005), pp. 278-81.

[103] Rev. Z. Barry, *"The Danger Controlled": A Sermon for the Sunday After the Attempted Murder of Prince Alfred, Preached in St Jude's, Randwick* (Sydney, 1868).

sympathy, which we can no longer doubt exists in the midst of us'.[104] A collaboration including the Barry and Rev. John McGibbon (one of those uncompromising evangelicals brought out to Australia by Dunmore Lang) its target was as much backsliding Protestants who sought accommodation with Rome as Rome itself. It lasted for thirty-eight issues before being superseded by the *Protestant Standard*, which rapidly established itself as the house publication of Australian Orangeism.

If sectarian divisions were then clearly evident in the public response to the assassination, historians have concentrated on them to the exclusion of other important tensions. For example, the territorial basis on which the 'indignant nation' of 1868 was conceived was far from uncontroversial. Indeed, as Alan Atkinson, Anne Coote and others have demonstrated, the existence of genuine *national* identities focused on individual colonies rather than on wider ideas of the trans-continental nation must remain a complicating factor in any account.[105] Sentiments of national shame and humiliation referenced by speakers were often tempered in this way. Speakers at meetings in New South Wales frequently dwelt on the accidental fact of the assassin's being a visitor to the colony, as did Alderman MacIntosh at the meeting of Sydney City Council: 'It was all very well to say that the wretch O'Farrell had come here from Victoria, that he was not a colonist of New South Wales … That was, however, but a very small modicum of consolation.'[106] That is was viewed as a consolation at all is worthy of note and doubtless arose in part as a response to barbed comments at meetings outside of New South Wales. In congratulating the Adelaide meeting for its expression of sympathy with the people of New South Wales, the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that this was especially necessary 'when a portion of the Victorian and

[104] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Mar. 1868.
[105] A. Atkinson, 'Tasmania and the Multiplicity of Nations', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, lii (2005), pp. 189-200; A. Coote, 'Out from the Legend's Shadow: Re-thinking National Feeling in Colonial Australia', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, x (2008), pp. 103-22.
[106] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Mar. 1868.

Queensland Press seized on the lamentable occurrence as an occasion for venting ungenerous and, we might add, unmanly, remarks on the loyalty of this colony.'[107]

Most culpable in this respect were the press and meetings in Victoria, where there was an added incentive in the shape of O'Farrell's long Victorian residence to dissociate the colony from the deed and its consequences. The *Argus*, for example, began its reporting of the event in that register, with its first editorial highlighting the attempted assassination as 'an indelible stain, nevertheless, on the reputation of Sydney'. It continued in this vein, with the offer of a reward for information on Fenianism in New South Wales being taken as proof positive that the 'Government of New South Wales is not so sure about the people of that colony' as the *Argus* was about Victorian loyalty.[108] Similar sentiments were an undercurrent at the indignation meetings. For example, Higinbotham at Melbourne spoke of 'this colony, where we have had no participation in the crime' and Pugh at Brisbane was 'sorry for many reasons that such a thing had happened in the oldest colony of the Australian group, but he was very glad it had not occurred in this colony'.[109] There was a similar point to another frequent suggestion at meetings – that had the attempt been made in that area, the loyalty of the people would not have been able to restrain itself and summary justice would have been administered on the spot. In Ballarat, for example, which had a special incentive to give a strong statement of loyalty, Captain W. C. Smith of the Ballarat Rangers argued: 'He was satisfied that had the base attempt been made in this district the wretch would not have lived one half-hour to tell the tale. (Enthusiastic cheering.)'[110]

Finally, while many speakers identified themselves as 'Irishmen' in framing response to the assassination, they were matched by the numbers who identified themselves as

[107] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Mar. 1868.
[108] *Argus*, 13 and 14 Mar. 1868.
[109] *Argus*, 14 Mar. 1868; *Brisbane Courier*, 17 Mar. 1868.
[110] *Ballarat Star*, 16 Mar. 1868.

'natives', as did A. L. MacDougall at the Parramatta meeting: 'As a native of Australia, I feel the reproach that is cast upon my country most poignantly.'[111] The dynamic was similar to that highlighted above – a politically 'suspect' group was staking its claim to full membership of the body politic.[112] While Irish elites largely rejected the notion of meeting *qua* Irishmen in response to the crisis, the natives had no such qualms and held a large 'Meeting of Native-Born Australians' in Sydney on 24 March. Whereas in many places the presence of symbols of loyalty to the crown had been demanded (for example, the hoisting of the union flag in preference to the corporation's one at Launceston) the meeting of natives tentatively used its own visual language and decorated the hall with 'the National emblem of the Cornstalk.'[113]

Some of the strongest sentiments surrounding the 'stain' on Australia's soil and on what might become of O'Farrell came from this gathering, with Mr Thornton roundly cheered when he 'hoped out land would not be polluted by allowing the remains of this wretched creature to rest upon its soil. He hoped the Government would cause his body to be taken away from our sight and thrown into the deep sea.' This sense of having an especial stake in repudiating the actions of O'Farrell – the 'stain' of his actions adding to the already problematic 'convict stain' over which the native-born fretted most consistently – also saw very potent endorsement of the more democratic and republican reading of Australia's political destiny. Geoffrey Eagar, the Colonial Treasurer, gave a full and nuanced account of Australian loyalty: 'Our loyalty commenced in loyalty to the constitution. This loyalty was the deliberate result of reason. And when turning from the constitution to the throne, the visible embodiment of the constitution, we found … one whose high qualities as a Queen are equalled by her merits as a woman'. The sentiments at the meeting were a ringing

[111] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Mar. 1868.
[112] For a good account of the challenges faced by 'natives' in colonial Australia, see J. Molony, *The Native-born: The First White Australians* (Melbourne, 2000).
[113] *Launceston Examiner*, 21 Mar. 1868. Full reports of the Natives' meeting and speeches are in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Mar. 1868 and *Empire*, 25 Mar. 1868.

endorsement of the liberal idea of Australian nationality marked in most indignation meetings, but also carried an implicit challenge to the more sentimental ideas of loyalty that had characterised some of the Prince's reception. They represented an early political statement of the 'Young Australia' trope, which was to become ever more important as both a statement of demographic facts and a powerful language of legitimation towards the end of the century.[114]

As such, the meeting involved more explicit political challenges and acted as a venue for the articulation of a native political identity. Marshal Burdekin's speech argued that this was the first time that native Australians had met face-to-face in large numbers and raised the prospect of the event acting as a catalyst for a native political platform: 'On this occasion we ought to lay down something of a policy as to the way in which the affairs of Australia ought to be conducted, so that those who are fellow-citizens with us may be influenced by their desire to have us as friends'. The most controversial speech, by Geoffrey Barton (older brother of Edmund, one of the architects of Federation) covered some similar ground, before launching into a sustained invective about the position of the native-born within colonial society:

> He could recollect no instance in which Australians as such had ever raised their voice or shown their face in public. An impartial observer could only say that we held the same rank socially, politically, and in every other respect as the Chinamen. (Laughter and dissent.) This was an extraordinary state of things and he could only account for it on the supposition that there existed some radical apathy in the minds of Australians –

[114] K. Inglis, 'Young Australia, 1870-1900: The Idea and the Reality', in G. Featherstone, ed., *The Colonial Child: Papers Presented at the 8th Biennial Conference of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, 12-13 October 1979* (Melbourne, 1981), pp. 1-23; S. Sleight, *Young People and the Shaping of Public Space in Melbourne, 1870-1914* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 32-9.

> that they had not yet risen to the prospect of patriotism … We were simply in the position of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers in the halls of their Norman conqueror – hewers of wood and drawers of water to those who came here and usurped all our high places.

Despite the Chair's attempt to steer Barton back to the meeting's more precise objective, he was allowed to continue by public acclamation and continued to push for the political mobilisation of the natives in the press controversy that followed the meeting.[115] There are elements of sour grapes about these speeches. Marshal Burdekin, whose career was blighted early by the opposition to his appointment as Colonial Treasurer and Barton himself, editor of *Sydney Punch* and so sharing in the 'marginal status' of colonial journalists, had every reason to turn the attempted assassination to these political ends.[116]

Nevertheless, we might at least speculate that the attempted assassination had some impact in encouraging native-born white Australians to consider their own claims to full membership of the community. Indeed, there is a direct line from this indignation meeting to the establishment of the Australian Patriotic Association later in 1868.[117] This body not only continued the association with Prince Alfred (being involved, for example, in the orchestration of the prince's laying of the foundation stone for the statue of Captain Cook in Hyde Park and pointedly holding its first anniversary picnic at Clontarf) but it was also an important stimulus for the foundation of the Australian Natives Association in Melbourne in

[115] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 and 9 Apr. 1868.
[116] McCreery, 'Rude Interruption', p. 4.
[117] The honorary secretary for the indignation meeting, C. Delohery, became the Australian Patriotic Association's secretary and was joined in this role by another speaker at the meeting, R. B. Smith. Geoffrey Eager was the guest of honour at the formal constitution of the Association, whose prospectus embodied many of the principles articulated by the speakers at the indignation meeting, see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 Sep. 1868.

1871.[118] The arguments and national vision that were articulated in the heated context of the indignation meeting of native-born Australians constituted a half-formed challenge that would mature in important ways in the 1880s.[119]

IV

Far from being a superficial 'orgy of loyalty' the Australian responses to the attempted assassination of Prince Alfred reveal a complexity that deserves to be taken seriously. Throughout, the overwhelming emphasis on achieving unanimity and uniformity did see very conscious airbrushing of contentious or controversial opinions. So great was the insecurity about how the event would be viewed in Britain that the monthly editions of Australian newspapers, designed in part for British audiences, carefully edited the reports of meetings so that the idea of a uniformly loyal response was substantiated. So, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* report on the meeting of Australian natives had included Barton's speech in full for a domestic audience; in the edited versions his was pruned far more substantially than those of the other speakers and all of the controversial content was removed.[120] Similarly, in its 'Summary for Europe' edition, the *Melbourne Argus* glossed over potential divisions and dwelt instead on the positive effect of the attempted assassination:

> [I]t instantaneously fused into one homogenous mass all the elements of society, brought men of the most opposite political opinions, religious creeds, and social grades upon a common platform … and although national and sectarian fanaticism

[118] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 Mar. and 8 Sep. 1869; *Illustrated Sydney News*, 15 Apr. 1869; M. Aveling, 'A History of the Australian Natives Association 1871-1900' (Monash Univ., Ph.D. thesis, 1970), pp. 1-7.
[119] Aveling, 'History of the Australian Natives Association', *passim*; Hirst, *Sentimental Nation*, pp. 26-44.
[120] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Mar. 1868.

> may lurk in the minds of a few ignorant zealots, to whom an orange rosette or a green riband have not yet lost all their pernicious and inflammatory symbolism, yet the bulk of the people in these colonies are beginning to forget the wretched feuds of the past and are working together harmoniously for a hopeful future.[121]

The argument pursued here is that the widespread anxiety and the emotional response to the attempted assassination fulfil at least some of the criteria that sociologists have taken to characterise 'cultural trauma'. In particular, the indignation meetings and press reporting during March 1868 incorporated a deep-seated discourse about the meaning of the national community. Thousands of colonists were forced to consider and, in the case of elites and journalists, to articulate their understandings of the social and political present and future of Australia and to do so in self-consciously national ways. Many imagined future historians looking back on the assassination as both a 'foul stain on Australian History', but writing 'in the same page' of how it also allowed Australia to demonstrate its pristine loyalty and speak 'with one united voice'.[122] That historians have not done so is telling, but it does not mean we should take any less seriously the widespread conviction in March 1868 that the attempted assassination was a transformative moment. The crisis of course demonstrated divisions – sectarian ones, but also tensions inflected with class, ethnicity and gender. Revealing as these divisions are, they should not overshadow the sustained efforts of a broad elite to represent a single vision of 'Australia' for both domestic and imperial audiences.

Nor should we fall back too easily on a narrative that presents 'hysterical loyalty' turning into 'sectarian paranoia'.[123] The evidence of the indignation meetings suggests that in

[121] *Argus*, 30 Mar. 1868.
[122] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 and 24 Mar. 1868.
[123] Davis, 'The Prince and the Fenians', p. 127.

public statements paranoia about the dangers of sectarianism was more prominent than sectarian paranoia itself. There was a widespread effort to stick to a liberal script, which did not blame all Catholics or all Irishmen for the actions of O'Farrell and argued for the maintenance of a political culture distinguished by civil and religious freedoms. Accelerating sectarian tensions were there, but they are less apparent in the public discourse of the indignation meetings than any reading of the existing historiography would suggest. In many ways the fulminations of Zachary Barry and the Orange lodges were aimed explicitly *against* the liberal vision stated and restated powerfully at hundreds of indignation meetings, which pointedly rejected the vision of politics upon which Barry's critique rested.

Finally, the response foreshadowed and addressed some of the psychological uncertainty that surrounded the relationship between the colonies and the crown when it came to the discussion of Federation. McKenna has pointed to one splendid irony in the response of the government of New South Wales. When Alfred, before leaving, suggested that the death sentence for O'Farrell be commuted, he was met with the response that as the administration of criminal justice was a 'local issue', the interference of the crown was unwelcome.[124] This article has argued that the wider response of elites, in the form of the indignation meetings, can be seen as a constructive response to the uncertainties of the imperial relationship and to the principal challenge following responsible government: 'to redefine loyalty in a colonial context – allowing scope for independence without including the dangers of republicanism and separatism.'[125] In the 'loyalty play' of the indignation meetings this redefinition was being worked out in a combination of fulsome (indeed, sometimes mawkishly sentimental) attachment to the crown and national self-congratulation on the free institutions and widely defined civil and religious liberties enjoyed under its protection. In

[124] McKenna, 'Monarchy', pp. 270-1. See also Atkinson, *Muddle-headed Republic*, pp. 15-16.
[125] McKenna, *Captive Republic*, p. 107.

acting as an opportunity publicly to square the circle of loyalty and independence, they were very likely a formative and emotional experience for many of those who would later address the challenges of Federation and used similar tropes to do so. Recent approaches have rejected unduly instrumental interpretations of the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia and urged greater engagement with the ideas and sentiments that underpinned it. These perspectives can be fruitfully applied within earlier periods, not least because, as this article has argued, long before it was a Commonwealth Australia had existed as an emotional community, an indignant nation, in 1868.

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